



Renewal Begins with A Reset

RECAP

This week's focus: God uses ordinary people to make an extraordinary difference.

The book of Nehemiah details one of the finest leadership initiatives in all of history with the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. In this book, God's people are called to live differently than the culture around them, by bringing the values of the Kingdom of God into a world that is unfamiliar and even hostile to His way of life. Nehemiah demonstrates how God revives His people by rebuilding what the enemy has destroyed, restoring the worship of God, and renewing the people of God. This is the driving purpose behind the massive building project and spiritual revival in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's name means, "Yahweh is my comfort". He is constantly hated, opposed, slandered, sued, lied about, and plotted against. Most people would break under such unrelenting pressure. Nehemiah, however, remained resolute because he continually met with God in prayer, worship, and journaling to receive the comfort and confidence he needed from God.

Nehemiah was a seemingly average man who loved God and was working a government job under a brutal dictator. The majority of the book are his journal entries (chapters 1-7&13). Although he is recognized by many as one of the greatest leaders in all of Scripture for rebuilding a city (in a short 52 days after 141 years of prior failed efforts), he is never mentioned in the New Testament.

In the winter season (November-December) of 445 BC, news was brought to Nehemiah by either his actual brother or a close male relative regarding how God's people were faring far away in Judah, in the city of Jerusalem. Years before under King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians attacked the city destroying it and carrying many of God's people into exile, as reported in Daniel.

The city was destroyed and largely abandoned because it was defenseless. God's people were discouraged. They were unable to live or worship God freely for years, despite multiple failed rebuilding attempts. The wall was necessary if God was to have His people in a place (Jerusalem) for the eventual coming of Jesus Christ.

In the opening chapter of Nehemiah, news came to Nehemiah that he could not shake. His nation's capital was in shambles and the people were in "great trouble and disgraced". His response was to sit down and weep. God had burdened him with a broken heart for his homeland and his people. What he would do next would change the trajectory of a nation and have a lasting impact on our world today.

Through his tears of brokenness and despair Nehemiah did the most spiritually strategic thing he could do, he prayed and cried out to God. It was through prayer that Nehemiah developed a humble confidence and determination to take on a God-sized project. It was through prayer that God moved in the heart of one man to do the impossible. It was through prayer that God would rebuild a wall, restore a nation, and renew the lives of His people.



Renewal Begins with A Reset

SHARE (5-10 min)

Icebreaker Question: If you could go anywhere and do anything for a month, where would you go and what would you do?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Nehemiah 1

1. What about the reading or message on Sunday stood out to you? Is there anything that was unclear, or that you have questions about?
2. Why did God allow the Babylonians to conquer Jerusalem, and the people living there? Fast forward to today, what is or are the effects of sin having on our culture, the church, and in society as a whole?
3. How does the report of Jerusalem's walls being destroyed, and gates being burned describe someone's spiritual condition? (Read Psalm 137) How should this type of report spur us to action?
4. The city and walls had been in ruins for 141 years with many attempts to rebuild. Why do you think the news he receives in vs 1-4 impacts him so deeply?
5. Look up Luke 19:28, 41-44 and Nehemiah 1. How does Nehemiah's heart for Jerusalem look a lot like Jesus'? What breaks your heart about your city?
6. Prayer was vital to Nehemiah's entire life. Look at his prayers in 1:4-11, 2:4, 4:4-5, 4:9, 5:19, 6:9, 6:14, 13:14, 13:22, 13:29-31. What is the purpose of prayer and why is it important to the believer?
7. What need or ministry has God burdened you for? What does it look like for you to respond like Nehemiah did to the burden He felt?
8. Nehemiah 1 reports Nehemiah's prayer needs. How can your Life Group be praying for you?

SUPPORT (15 min)

Spend some time praying together either in a large group, smaller groups, or pairs. Keep in mind the tension between our need for prayer and the hesitancy for many to pray in public. Do your best to share your needs and pray for one another. Pray also that God would use this season to rebuild, restore, and renew the people of GateWay, Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz County, and beyond.